

News Release

For Immediate Release

Date: March 16, 1999

Contact: Robert Lesley (601) 359-1135
robertl@mdac.state.ms.us

SPELL MARKS AG WEEK WITH NEW PROGRAM; CONSUMERS CAN SAY "MAKE MINE MISSISSIPPI"

(Jackson) Mississippi consumers who want to support their home state at the cash register will soon be able to tell which products are made by their neighbors, thanks to a new identification program unveiled by the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC). Dr. Lester Spell, Jr., Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce unveiled a new "Make Mine Mississippi" logo at a ceremony marking National Agriculture Day at the State Capitol.

"Wherever I go, people ask a very good question," says Commissioner Spell. "How can I tell if the products I buy are made in Mississippi? Well, now we have an answer and the answer is, 'Make Mine Mississippi.'"

Although this is a new logo identification program, the idea has been used successfully in other states. "Georgia estimates that it has increased the sale of products that use its logo program by 5%-10%," says Roger Barlow, Director of Market Development for MDAC. "Louisiana uses a program not only to identify Cajun food, but to guard against fraud by out of state companies that want consumers to believe their products are from Louisiana. And, a Tennessee survey found that, quality and price being comparable, 70% of Tennesseans would prefer to buy a product made in their state."

More than 90 companies have signed on to the "Make Mine Mississippi" program so far. It costs nothing for a company to join, but the products have to meet certain requirements. They have to be produced, processed or manufactured in Mississippi or use at least 51% Mississippi materials. In return, the company gets an identifiable logo and promotion through the Market Development Division of MDAC. "We go all over the world promoting Mississippi and Mississippi products," says Lester Spell. "This is a win-win situation for our state and our citizens."

(More)

Requirements For Products In The “Make Mine Mississippi” Program

- 1. The firm using the service mark must be registered with the Market Development Division of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC).**
- 2. The service mark may be placed or used for advertising only on products that are at least 51% produced, processed or manufactured in Mississippi.**
- 3. The service mark must be used in its entirety, with no deviation from graphic standards as provided.**
- 4. The service mark may be incorporated into packaging or labeling of a product, all promotional materials used in advertising, point-of-purchase displays and in the form of a pressure sensitive sticker.**
- 5. MDAC guarantees product origin only.**
- 6. The service mark may be promoted in any color.**
- 7. Violation of the above specifications may result in suspension of the right to use the *Make Mine Mississippi* logo.**

Results From Other States With Similar Programs

- Georgia has increased sales of products marked with the *Georgia. Always in Good Taste* logo by 5%-10%. Georgia program includes 200 companies**
- 70% of Tennessee residents surveyed said they would purchase a product with the *Pick Tennessee Products* logo as long as price and quality were similar**
- North Carolina’s *Goodness Grows in North Carolina* program has 700 producer/processors and 350 retailers participating**
- Louisiana licenses 432 companies to use its *Certified CAJUN* and/or *CERTIFIED A product of Louisiana* logos**

Agriculture Backgrounder

Agriculture Council of America

Tel: (913)491-1895

Fax: (913)491-6502

e-mail: info@agday.org

Profile of the farmer

- Nearly two million people farm or ranch in the United States. Almost 90 percent of U.S. farms are operated by individuals or family corporations. More than 15 percent of the U.S. population is employed in farm or farm-related jobs, including production agriculture, farm inputs, processing and marketing, and wholesale and retail sales.
- According to the 1992 Census of Agriculture, 47 percent of the farmers were 55 years of age or older which was up only two percent from 1987. During the same period, there were two percent fewer farmers under the age of 45.
- Forty-two percent of U.S. total land area is farmland (945.5 million acres.) In 1900, the average farm size was 147 acres compared to 491 acres today.
- The top five agricultural commodities include: cattle and calves, dairy products, corn, soybeans and hogs. U.S. farmers account for 42.7 percent of the world's production of soybeans and 34.4 percent of the world's production of corn.
- Farmers and ranchers are independent business people who provide for their families by growing and producing food and fiber. They use modern production techniques to increase the quality and quantity of the food they produce. In the 1960s one farmer supplied 25.8 persons in the U.S. and abroad. In 1994, one farmer supplied food for 129 people in the U.S. and abroad.

The Changing Face of Agriculture

- Farmers and ranchers are producing meat lower in fat and cholesterol. This has resulted in retail cuts that are 15 percent leaner, giving consumers better value for their dollar. For example, a pork tenderloin now has only one more gram of fat than a skinless chicken breast, one of the true fat "lightweights." Also, much leaner beef cuts are being produced than 20 years ago, resulting in 27 percent less fat reaching the retail case than in 1985.
- Research and advancements in biotechnology are now in the market place with tastier fruits and vegetables that stay fresh longer and are not damaged by insects.
- A new technique called "precision farming" boosts crop yields and reduces waste by using satellite maps and computers to match seed, fertilizer and crop protector applications to local soil conditions.
- Farm equipment has evolved dramatically from the team of horses used in the early 1900's. Today's four-wheel drive tractors have the power of 40-300 horses.

- This makes for a large capital investment, as farmers pay anywhere from \$97,000 for an average 160 horse-power tractor to \$170,000 for a four-wheel drive model.
- As the amount of mechanization and horse power in farm machinery has increased, the time needed to complete tasks has decreased. Combines, huge machines used to harvest grains such as corn, soybeans and wheat, have dramatically changed agriculture. In the 1930's, before the machines were available, a farmer could harvest an average of 100 bushels of corn by hand in a nine-hour day. Today's combines can harvest 900 bushels of corn per hour—or 100 bushels of corn in under seven minutes!
 - The efficiency of U.S. farmers benefits the United States consumer in the pocketbook. U.S. consumers spend approximately nine percent of their income on food compared with 11 percent in the United Kingdom, 17 percent in Japan, 27 percent in South Africa and 53 percent in India.

Why Educate About Agriculture?

Based on the findings of the National Research Council's 1988 report, *Understanding Agriculture - New Directions for Education*.

- Agriculture is too important a topic to be taught only to the relatively small percentage of students considering careers in agriculture and pursuing vocational agricultural studies.
- Agricultural literacy includes an understanding of agriculture's history and current economic, social, and environmental significance to all Americans. This understanding includes some knowledge of food and fiber production, processing, and domestic and international marketing.
- Increased knowledge of agriculture and nutrition allows individuals to make informed personal choices about diet and health.
- Informed citizens will be able to participate in establishing the policies that will support a competitive agricultural industry in this country and abroad.
- The National Research Council offered these principal findings and recommendations:
 - Agricultural education in U.S. high schools usually does not extend beyond the offering of a vocational agriculture program.
 - The focus of agricultural education must change to include more than vocational agriculture.
 - Beginning in kindergarten and continuing through twelfth grade, all students should receive some systematic instruction about agriculture.
- Employment opportunities exist across the board in agriculture, career choices cover farm production, agribusiness management and marketing; agricultural research and engineering; food science; processing, and retailing; banking; education; landscape architecture; urban planning; and other fields.

Fun Facts About Agriculture

Did you know?

The Food We Eat

- In 1996, each American consumed an average of 77 pounds more of commercially grown vegetables than in 1970, 63 pounds more grain products, 54 pounds more fruits, 32 pounds more poultry, 10 gallons more milk lower in fat than whole milk, 20.5 pounds less red meat, 73 fewer eggs, and 17 gallons less whole milk.
- It takes just 40 days for most Americans to earn enough money to pay for their food supply for the entire year. In comparison with the 129 days it takes the average American to earn enough money to pay federal, state and local taxes for the year. (Food Checkout Day is February 9, 1999.)
- More than 96 billion pounds of edible "surplus" food is thrown away in the U.S. each year. It is estimated that almost 27% of our food supply is wasted.
- Americans are eating about 14 pounds of turkey a piece each year, more than double the rate 20 years ago.

New Ways to Help the Planet

- Farmers and ranchers provide food and habitat for 75% of the nations wildlife.
- Plant and animal biotechnology have resulted in new antibodies for immunizations. Agriculture has also contributed to research that has helped develop surgical techniques and pharmaceuticals that help save lives.
- Ethanol and new bio-diesel fuels made from corn, soybeans and other grains are beneficial to the environment and helps contribute to energy independence for the U.S. Agriculture is Around Us Everyday
- Products we use in our everyday lives come from plant and animal by-products produced by America's farmers and ranchers: - Health care: Pharmaceuticals, surgical sutures, ointments, latex gloves, x-ray film, gelatin for capsules and heart valves.

Construction: Lumber, paints, brushes, tar paper, dry wall and tool handles.

- Transportation: Fuel, lubricants, antifreeze, tires and upholstery.
- Manufacturing: Adhesives, solvents and detergents.
- Printing: Paper, ink and film.
- Personal Care Products: Shampoo, cosmetics, lotions, finger nail polish and toothpaste.
- Education: Crayons, textbooks, chalk, desks, pencils and paper.
- Sports: Uniforms, baseball bats, leather equipment and shoes.

Holy Cow!

- A typical, full grown Holstein cow weighs about 1,400 pounds and produces 60 pounds of milk per day.
- One day's production is 2.6 pounds of butter or 7 gallons of milk or 6 pounds of cheese.

- A dairy cow consumes 35 gallons of water, 20 pounds of grain and concentrated feed and 35 pounds of hay or silage (a mixture of corn and grass) in just one day.
- It usually takes about 20 minutes for a cow to be milked. On average a cow is milked 2 to 3 times a day.
- Hamburger meat from a single steer will make about 720 quarter pound hamburger patties. That's enough for a family of 4 to enjoy hamburgers each day for nearly 6 months.